

Daniel C. Byrd
James Madison Fellow (2004), Georgetown University
Ph.D. student, Social Studies Education, University of Georgia
Social Studies Instructor, Georgia Governor's Honors Program
dbyrd@uga.edu

Subject: U.S. History, U.S. Government

Ability Levels: low to advanced

Unit: The U.S. Constitution

Topic: Democratic Concepts and Reflective Deliberation

NCSS Thematic Strands

VI Power, Authority, and Governance (a,b,c,d,h,i,j)

X Civic Ideals and Practice (a,b,c,d,h,i)

Summary of Daily Lesson Plans

Prior to Day One: Students will review the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution:

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

Day One:

Activity 1: Instructor will ask students to respond to a series of ethical dilemmas. The students will choose among the answers Yes, No, or Maybe and have the chance to explain their choices. This activity will begin a process of articulating individual notions of the concept "justice." (30 min)

Activity 2: Students will review and discuss various informal logical fallacies (ex: the straw man, personal attack, appeal to authority, etc.) and then analyze an article for these fallacies using a structured deliberation model known as Inside-Out. (30 min)

Activity 3: Students will read a synopsis of Just War Theory and prepare to analyze these conceptions of justice with those presented in the 2006 State of the Union Address. (30 min)

Day Two:

Activity 1: Students will watch portions of the 2006 State of the Union Address and participate in a deliberation of the principles articulated in this speech as compared with those contained in the Just War Theory synopsis. (45 min)

Activity 2: Students will provide definitions and/or examples of the following democratic concepts contained in the U.S. Constitution: 1-Justice, 2- Domestic Tranquility, 3- Common Defence, 4- General Welfare and 5- Liberty (15 min)

Activity 3: Instructor will explain the basic framework of John Rawls' *Theory of Justice* with a specific focus on his two principles of justice and the concept of inviolable rights (30 min)

Day Three:

Activity 1: Students will be split into groups. Students will examine the rights contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and deliberate the extent to which the U.S. Constitution provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and guaranteeing these same rights. (30 min)

Activity 2 : Students will present their own reaction papers which address an example of injustice or a violation of any human right as defined by the individual student. (60 min)

Lesson Plan 1

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Introduction to Lesson

Objectives: Students will be able to:

Analyze their own and others' notions of "justice"

Identify and deliberate informal logical fallacies

Synthesize the principles of Just War Theory

Rationale: The purpose of this lesson is to expose students to the difficulty encountered when trying to articulate a consensus on the meaning of justice as applied to individual decisions and arguments, Just War Theory, and ultimately, the U.S. Constitution.

Materials: paper, pens, 1-copy of informal logical fallacies, 2-copy of op-ed from *The New York Times*, 3-copy of Brian Orend's entry on Just War Theory from the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 4- copy of Vincent Ferraro's Principles of the Just War (please see Appendix for copies and links to websites)

Student Instructions: Students will participate in the ethical dilemmas activity, read and discuss informal logical fallacies using the handout provided and the Donald Rumsfeld op-ed (or another article of the instructor's choosing), and then read the synopsis of Just War Theory.

Links: This lesson can be linked to previous classroom activities and discussions about the extent to which the U.S. Constitution provides an adequate framework for making decisions concerning justice and the idea of justifiable actions given a specific ethical dilemma.

Body of Lesson

Activity 1

Introduction: The instructor will begin class by explaining the topic for the day. The class will be based around an open-ended discussion of ethical principles and the process by which individuals evaluate competing claims of justice.

Activity: This activity requires the instructor to ask the entire class a series of questions with the intent of generating a productive discussion. Three signs will be placed around the classroom, one with the word "Yes", one with "No", and one with "Maybe." Students are instructed to stand near the sign based on their answer to the following questions.

After each question, students are provided the opportunity to explain their choice and the process by which they evaluate claims of “right and wrong” (i.e. claims of “justice”)

Ethical Dilemmas:

- 1- You have been shopping at the grocery store and are going through the check out line. The store clerk gives you too much change. Is it okay for you to keep the extra change?
- 2- You are driving down a road where the visibility is one mile in every direction as you approach a four way intersection. You can see with absolute certainty that no vehicles or pedestrians are anywhere within one mile. Is it okay for you to run the stop sign at the intersection?
- 3- You find out that someone who was convicted of burglary and served a prison term is now free and has moved into your neighborhood. Do you have the right to physically assault this person in an attempt to prevent him/her from ever committing another crime?

End-activity: Reemphasize the notion that although most people will claim to “know the difference between right and wrong,” the way in which they determine just actions given a specific scenario can vary greatly. Even people who agree on the proper action to take can have different reasons for doing so. In other words, trying to evaluate competing claims of justice can be difficult without a sound argument for one’s position. Try to summarize any consensus about these issues in class.

Transition: Link the idea of making ethical decisions to the study of arguments and logical fallacies.

Activity 2

Introduction: Ask students to think about the ways in which arguments are formed and the possibilities of making mistakes in one’s reasoning, both intentionally and unintentionally. Provide students with a list of informal logical fallacies and give examples of some common errors. After this brief introduction, ask students to read the op-ed article submitted by Donald Rumsfeld and note any fallacies, if any, they believe are contained within his arguments.

Activity: Students will be split into two equally sized groups, one being the “inside” group and one being the “outside” group. The outside group will be physically seated around the other group of students. The inside group will deliberate the types of arguments contained in the Rumsfeld article with specific reference to any informal fallacies that may exist. While this is taking place, all members of the outside group will actively listen and take notes on the inside group’s conversation, but will not participate in the deliberation until instructed. After everyone in the inside group has spoken, the instructor will stop the conversation and ask everyone to switch places. The new “inside” group will now continue the deliberation as the others actively listen and take notes. The

new “outside” group will actively listen and take notes on the conversation just as the previous round. After everyone has spoken, the instructor will stop the conversation so the entire group can reflect on the type of deliberation that took place.

End-activity: Ask students to describe what differences they noticed in analyzing an argument within a structured deliberation versus an open ended debate or discussion of the same topic (i.e. just actions and the Iraq war). Emphasize how attempting this analysis can lead to collaborative understandings around the formation of arguments, as opposed to conversations which devolve into heated disagreements resembling the “I’m right and you’re wrong” conclusion.

Transition: Link this approach towards deliberation and the formation of arguments with an analysis of principles from Just War Theory.

Activity 3

Introduction: Provide a brief synthesis of the contributions and development of Just War Theory with an emphasis on articulating the importance of “justice” as a fundamental democratic concept within the U.S. Constitution.

Activity: Students will read a synopsis of Just War Theory.

Closure for lesson: Instructor will ask students to continue reflecting on their own and others’ notions of justice and how this concept has been intended to create a fair and democratic society via the U.S. Constitution. Students will be asked to compare these definitions of justice with those articulated in the 2006 State of the Union Address on the following day.

Lesson Plan 2

Subject: U.S. History, U.S. Government

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Introduction to Lesson

Objectives: Students will be able to:

Compare principles of Just War Theory with recent depictions of justice

Analyze their own and other's definitions of concepts in the U.S. Constitution

Synthesize John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*

Rationale: The purpose of this lesson is to provide a philosophical framework for evaluating competing claims of justice while asking students to articulate their own definitions of the democratic concepts contained in the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution.

Materials: copy of the 2006 State of the Union Address (or another political speech which addresses a recent depiction of justice), poster board, tape, markers, diagram of John Rawls' theory (please see Appendix)

Student Instructions: Students will analyze excerpts of a political address and deliberate the extent to which ideas contained in the speech reflect principles of Just War Theory. Students will then provide their own definitions for Justice, Domestic Tranquility, the Common Defence, General Welfare, and Liberty.

Links: This lesson can be linked to previous classroom activities and discussions about the extent to which the U.S. Constitution provides comprehensive and applicable definitions of the concepts meant to establish a democratic republic.

Body of Lesson

Activity 1

Introduction: Introduce the lesson by stating that every claim of right or wrong necessarily endorses certain philosophical foundations and belief systems whether those are explicitly stated or not. In order to uncover those conceptions of justice, students must be able to recognize ethical claims and patterns of thought which serve as the framework for any given argument.

Activity: The instructor will ask students to analyze a political address by comparing and contrasting the implicit and explicit depictions of justice contained within the speech with those derived from Just War Theory.

End-activity: Emphasize the importance of analyzing the language that serves as a foundation for making ethical claims and as a justification for acting on those claims. The U.S. Constitution provides its own terms and concepts by which our society is structured and that same analysis is useful, if not necessary, in order to decide if society is living up to these ideals.

Transition: Explain that democratic concepts, though well accepted in the United States, can often be defined in very different ways and as a result can have very different implications.

Activity 2

Introduction: Explain to students how the U.S. Constitution is meant to serve as a framework for creating a fair and equitable society.

Activity: The instructor will tape 5 poster boards on the walls of the classroom. Every student will be given a marker. At the top of each poster board, the instructor will write 1 of the following 5 concepts contained in the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution... Justice, Domestic Tranquility, the Common Defence, General Welfare, and Liberty. Each student will be asked to write their own definition of these concepts on the poster board.

End-activity: Read and discuss the different definitions provided by students. Examine the similarities and differences and ask students to explain their conceptions of these terms.

Transition: Link this attempt by the students to what political philosophers and writers are attempting when forming their own theories about the structures of society.

Activity 3

Introduction: Provide students with a brief introduction to the life and contributions of political philosopher John Rawls.

Activity: The instructor will introduce students to the basic framework of John Rawls' theory and two principles of justice contained in *A Theory of Justice* through a brief lecture, using a diagram of Rawls' major concepts and any other supplemental materials (please see Appendix).

End-activity: Provide time for students to ask questions about Rawls' theory and how this framework might be useful for evaluating competing claims of justice and the U.S. Constitution.

Closure for lesson: Instructor will explain how Rawls' theory leads to the idea of individuals possessing inviolable rights which cannot be trumped by competing interests in fair and just society. This idea of inviolable rights will lead into a discussion during the next class period of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Lesson Plan 3

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Introduction to Lesson.

Objectives: Students will be able to:

Analyze and discuss the idea of inviolable human rights.

Articulate and discuss their own examples of societal justice and human rights.

Rationale: The purpose of this lesson is to provide students with a primary document which serves as one example of an attempt to define the rights that all individuals possess. Secondly, students will utilize all parts of this unit to articulate their own examples of inviolable human rights and social justice.

Materials: 5-copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, writing materials

Student Instructions: Students will analyze the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and write a paper which addresses a societal injustice or violation of human rights.

Links: This lesson will be linked to previous classroom discussions about the U.S. Constitution and human rights.

Body of Lesson

Activity 1

Introduction: The instructor will begin class by explaining how human rights have been conceived in various historical documents, including the U.S. Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Activity: Students will be divided into three equally sized groups and asked to read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Group 1 can focus on Articles 1-10, Group 2 on Articles 11-20, and Group 3 on Articles 21-30. After the students have had time to read through these Articles, an open discussion can be initiated for the entire class where students are given a chance to critique the rights enumerated in this document.

End-activity: If desired, the instructor can ask students if they feel that the U.S. government has recently violated any of these rights. Doing this can provide a context within the students' lives that may help in understanding how these rights are a part of society.

Transition: Link the attempt to define human rights with the idea that every individual must understand and be able to recognize when their own and other's rights are being violated in order to maintain the ideals contained in the U.S. Constitution.

Activity 2

Introduction: Ask students to think about the rights they feel all humans should possess as well as a scenario where an individual or group has had their rights violated.

Activity: Students will be asked to write a 1 page "reaction paper" where they articulate an inviolable human right and give an example of this right being violated. Students will be free to use the U.S. Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as references but this does not have to be a requirement. Students should include possible resolutions for the violations they cite.

End-activity: After completing the reaction papers, students will be asked to share their examples with the entire class. While giving a brief synopsis of their reaction papers, other students will generate questions to ask the presenter. This entire process can be limited to just a few minutes for each student and may require extra time depending on the size of the class.

Closure for lesson: The instructor can reiterate to students how the idea of human rights involves many aspects of developing a conceptual framework for understanding justice within a society. The development of the U.S. Constitution is one example of this process. The importance of continuing to analyze and further develop one's own ideas around this topic should be emphasized in an effort to guarantee the realization of these rights within a fair and just society.

Appendix

1- Informal Logical Fallacies <http://www.nizkor.org/features/fallacies/>

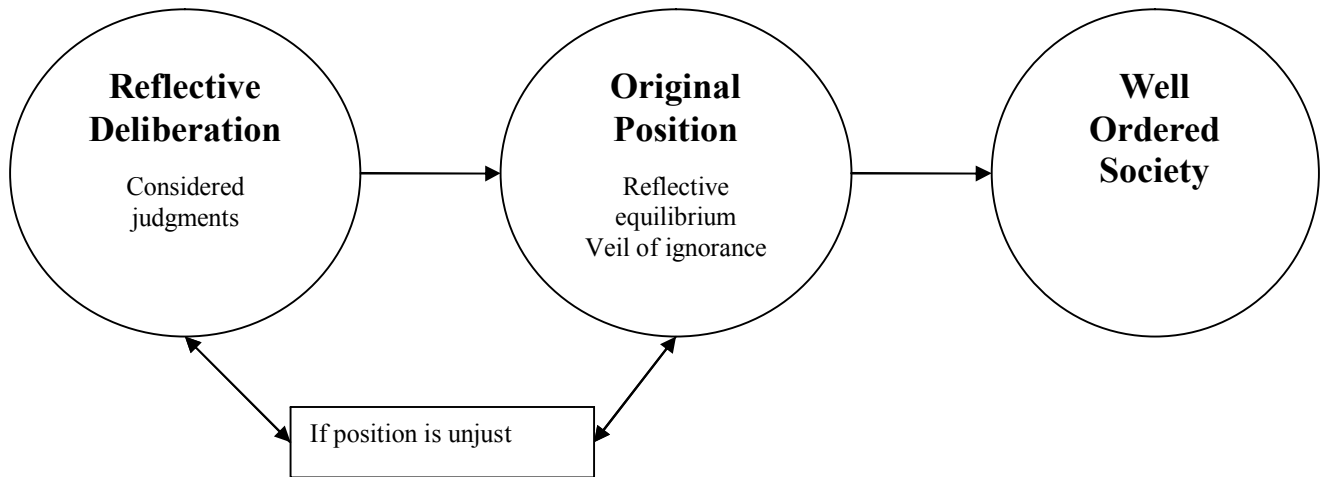
2- “The Price of Freedom in Iraq” by Donald Rumsfeld, *The New York Times*, March 19, 2004

3- <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/war/>

4- <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pol116/justwar.htm>

5- <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>

Overview of John Rawls' Theory of Justice



*Diagram developed by Alex Kaufman, Dept. of Political Science, University of Georgia